

## **INTRODUCTION**

A review of the District of Columbia's child and family services programs was completed pursuant to section 1123A of the Social Security Act (Act) and Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Sections 1355.31 through 1355.37. These sections charge the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) with the review of such programs. The purpose of the review is to determine the State's substantial conformity with State plan requirements and other requirements under titles IV-B and IV-E of the Act.

The Child and Family Services Review in the District of Columbia covered the range of child and family services programs funded through titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. It evaluated seven specific safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes for services delivered to children and families. In addition to reviewing for case outcomes, the review also examined seven systemic factors that affect the District's capacity to deliver services in a manner that promotes positive outcomes for children and families.

During the period under review, the Child and Family Services Agency had responsibility for neglect cases while the Metropolitan Police Department and the Court Social Services Division had responsibility for abuse cases. In this bifurcated approach, only the Metropolitan Police Department had the authority to remove children from their homes for abuse and determine the need for out of home placement. The Court Social Services Division would then provide all services to ensure the well-being of the abused child and to stabilize and/or reunify the family as quickly as possible. In the event that foster care placement became necessary, the Court Social Services Division would relinquish responsibility for the child and transfer the case to the Child and Family Services Agency.

The first phase of the Child and Family Services Review consisted of the development of a State Profile, derived from data for Federal Fiscal Year 1999 contained in the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and for calendar year 1999 from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS). This profile highlighted key performance indicators related to safety and permanency for children in the child welfare system. From the profile and other sources of information, the District of Columbia developed a Statewide Assessment, which described the processes, procedures and policies of its child protective services, foster care and adoption programs. This assessment also focused on the systemic factors that are in place, which enable the District to carry out these processes, procedures, and policies.

The second phase of the review involved an on-site review of 50 cases, drawn at random, of children who were active in the child welfare system during the period under review (April 1, 2000 through July 29, 2001). This phase of the review, conducted during the week of July 29, 2001, assessed the quality of services provided and verified the information contained in the State Profile and Statewide Assessment on an individual foster care and protective services case basis.

Forty-two reviewers and team leaders, operating in two-person (State/Federal) teams, reviewed and rated the services provided to these children and their families in relationship to safety, permanency, and well-being. The ratings were derived from documentation in the case records, as well as from interviews with those involved with the cases, such as parents, caseworkers, foster parents, service providers, and, when appropriate, children themselves.

Individual and group interviews were also held with stakeholders who have knowledge and experience with the child and family services system in the District to assess the quality and efficacy of the systemic factors described in the Statewide Assessment. These interviews included discussions with service providers, casework staff, foster parents, agency attorneys, Guardians Ad Litem, and representatives from agencies and organizations such as the Department of Mental Health, Metropolitan Police Department, Administrative Review Unit, Mayor's Office, Department of Education, Superior Court, Citizen's Review Board, and other community partners.

The results of the Statewide Assessment, the on-site case reviews and the stakeholder interviews were compiled by the review team and used to make a determination about the District's substantial conformity with regard to each of the seven outcomes and seven systemic factors. This report summarizes the information obtained from the review pertaining to each outcome and systemic factor, and the performance indicators used to evaluate them.

In order for the State to be determined to be in substantial conformity on any given outcome, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 90 percent of the cases reviewed. In addition, the State must meet the national standard that has been established for any statewide aggregate data attached to that particular outcome. The Administration for Children and Families Regional Office will be working with the District of Columbia's Child and Family Services Agency to develop a Program Improvement Plan (PIP) that addresses the areas found to not be in substantial conformity.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Child and Family Services Review process examines seven major child welfare outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being from a randomly selected sample of cases. It also examines the level of functioning of seven systemic factors, primarily on the basis of interviews with key community and agency stakeholders. Of the District's child welfare programs, the review determined that the District was operating in substantial conformity with applicable Federal requirements on one of the seven major outcomes and with four of the systemic factors.

To assist readers in interpreting the findings of the reviews, it is important to note that the District of Columbia's child welfare system has been the subject of a number of other evaluations, some of which have focused on specific areas of practice. Conversely, the Child and Family Services Review is broad in its coverage of child welfare programs, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, rather than targeted to any one specific area. The review also limits its examination of outcomes and systemic factors to a specific time period. In the case of the District, that time period was April 1, 2000 to July 29, 2001. The results reflect both the randomness of the case sample and the breadth of the review. It is intended to provide insight into the interrelated outcomes and systemic factors under review. With a strong focus on developing program improvement plans that are based on the results of the reviews, the process strives to identify not only areas needing improvement, but also the strengths within programs upon which meaningful plans for improvement can be developed.

Among the individual items rated as strengths were the District's timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment and the lack of repeat maltreatment in the cases reviewed (both pertaining to safety outcome 1). For children in foster care, the review also found several individual strengths in the District's efforts to preserve the continuity of family relationships and connections, place children in proximity to their families and with their siblings when possible, preserve important connections for the children, and utilize relatives as placement resources (all pertaining to permanency outcome 2). Similarly, the review documented significant strengths in four of the seven systemic factors reviewed: the District's quality assurance system, service array, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention.

The Review identified needs for improvement in the areas of safely maintaining children in their own homes wherever possible and appropriate (both pertaining to safety outcome 2), providing children with permanency and stability in their living situations (permanency outcome 1), visiting with parents and siblings in foster care and maintaining the relationship of children in care with their parents (both pertaining to permanency outcome 2), and in all three child well-being outcomes: that families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs, that children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs, and that children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs. Additionally, the systemic factors of statewide information system, case review system, and training are areas noted as being in need of improvement.

Presented below is a synopsis of the Review findings.

## **KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO OUTCOMES**

### **I. SAFETY**

***Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.***

#### **Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment**

In nine of the ten applicable cases reviewed for this item, staff initiated investigations of reports of child maltreatment within the District's timeframes. The remaining 40 cases did not involve reports of abuse or neglect during the period under review. The case record review found that significant efforts were made to respond in a timely manner to reports of abuse and neglect received after hours.

#### **Item 2. Repeat Maltreatment**

No reports of repeat maltreatment were found in the forty-five case records examined, for which this item was applicable, during the period under review (April 2000 to July 29, 2001). However, twenty of the cases that were reviewed had a history of repeat maltreatment, most involving the same perpetrators and/or general complaint, over the life of the cases.

#### **Status of Safety Outcome S1 – Substantial Conformity**

Ninety-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for repeat maltreatment and maltreatment of children in foster care.

***Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.***

#### **Item 3. Services To Families to Protect Children in Their Homes and Prevent Removal**

The case record review found a wide array of placement prevention services are available throughout the District to families in an effort to keep children from being inappropriately removed from their homes, including Families Together, crisis intervention, parenting classes, connecting families to Collaboratives, and the use of court-ordered services. However, in some of the cases reviewed, services were provided to address the initially identified problem, but not the potential underlying causes of the problems, such as domestic violence, homelessness, substance abuse, continued educational neglect or sexual abuse. The Agency provided services to families but did not always monitor whether change occurred as a result of the services.

#### **Item 4. Risk of Harm to Child**

The case record review found a general lack of family, safety, and/or risk assessments. When the structured decision making instrument was used by Agency workers, it was not always completed in a way that showed thoughtful and careful consideration of the risk of harm to the child and the family's needs. In some cases workers missed important issues that were the cause of many of the problems such as substance abuse or mental illness. Eighty-six percent of the cases rated as needing improvement for this item were in-home protective services cases rather than foster care cases.

#### **Status of Safety Outcome S2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Seventy percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Safety Outcome S2.

## **II. PERMANENCY**

*Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.*

#### **Item 5. Foster Care Re-Entries**

No foster care re-entries occurred in the cases reviewed during the period under review. The review found that once children were in foster care they remained in care. Conversely, the Agency's aggregate data (22.26%) did not meet the national standard (8.6%) for the number of children who re-entered foster care within twelve months of a prior foster care episode.

#### **Item 6. Stability of Foster Care Placements**

The case record review showed many children experienced stable placements during the period under review. Children with mental health needs and emotional/behavioral problems however, generally experienced more placement disruptions than children without these issues. Although the District exceeded the national standard (DC = 94.66%, national standard = 86.7%) for children who have had no more than two placement settings within twelve months of the latest home removal, the case record review rated 29 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement.

#### **Item 7. Permanency Goals for Children**

Little evidence was found in the cases reviewed that showed the Agency is consistently petitioning to terminate the parental rights of parents whose children have been in foster care for 15 of the last 22 months. Of the foster care cases reviewed, 54 percent of the children who were in care longer than 15 months did not have parental rights terminated and compelling reasons for not terminating parental rights were not documented in the case plan or court order. Children in the sample were in care an average of approximately 65 months before they achieved their permanency plan or were still in placement as of the July 29, 2001 review.

#### **Item 8. Independent Living Services**

Independent living assessments and inventories were completed and included in most of the case records reviewed and appropriate independent living services were developed based on the individual needs of the youth. In some of the cases reviewed, there was a lack of coordination between the Agency and the independent living provider. The review also found that in the cases reviewed, only one foster parent was engaged in helping to teach independent living skills to the youth in her care.

#### **Item 9. Adoption**

Stakeholder interviews indicated that the increase in the number of adoption finalizations in the past two years is due to an increase in adoption by relatives and foster parents of the children to whom they have been providing care. However, the review found that adoption was not considered soon enough in some cases where it was readily apparent that children could not be reunified with their families. Although the District exceeded the national standard (DC = 39.01%, national standard = 32.0%) for children who exited care to a finalized adoption in less than twenty-four months from the time of the latest removal, the case record review rated 37.5 percent of the cases reviewed as an area needing improvement.

#### **Item 10. Permanency Goals of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangements**

In many of the cases reviewed, the Agency attempted to establish more permanent goals for children, such as adoption and reunification, before changing the permanency goal to independent living or emancipation. In some cases reviewed, however, there was no indication that adoption, kinship care, or legal guardianship was considered as permanency options or appropriately ruled out for children. In some cases, reunification should have been dismissed early on as not an appropriate permanency goal so that another goal could have been achieved rather than simply letting children age out of the system.

#### **Status of Permanency Outcome P1 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Fifty-four percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P1. Statewide data indicators for FY1999 met the national standard for stability of foster care placements and length of time to achieve adoption. The Agency showed strengths in foster care re-entries and stability of foster care placements, however the review found that efforts need to be increased in permanency planning for children in the care of the Child and Family Services Agency.

***Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.***

**Item 11. Proximity of Foster Care Placements**

In 96 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, proximity of foster care placements was rated as a strength. While children may have been placed in the surrounding States of Maryland and Virginia, 87 percent were placed with their relatives and/or foster parents where they had strong family and neighborhood ties.

**Item 12. Placement with Siblings**

The District generally made efforts to place siblings together at the initial placement. While not all children in the sibling group were together in the same placement, the review found that more than half of the cases reviewed had children placed with at least one other sibling.

**Item 13. Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care**

Interviews with parents, children, and foster parents indicated that the Agency facilitated frequent visitation between parents and siblings in foster care when the child's permanency goal was reunification. However, there was a general lack of visitation documentation in the case records.

**Item 14. Preserving Connections**

Ninety-two percent of the cases that were rated as a strength for this item indicated that children in foster care had some type of continued contact with their family. In addition to contact between children and their families through visitations, other means of contact were utilized such as letters, telephone calls, and e-mails.

**Item 15. Relative Placements**

The District sought out and considered relatives as placement resources in 75 percent of the cases reviewed. Fictive kin, such as godparents or family friends were considered as relative placements when relatives were not available or appropriate.

**Item 16. Relationship of Children in Care with Their Parents**

Several of the cases reviewed showed a strong partnership between foster and biological parents which helped facilitate parent-child relationships. However, in cases in which the parents' whereabouts were reported to be unknown, the Agency made little effort to locate them so that a continuing relationship with their children could be maintained.

### **Status of Permanency Outcome P2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Permanency Outcome P2. The Agency showed strengths in proximity of foster care placements and preserving connections, however the review found that increased efforts should be made in the areas of visitation between children and their parents and siblings and the relationship of children in care with their parents.

## **III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING**

***Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.***

### **Item 17. Needs and Services of Children, Parents, & Foster Parents**

The case record review found that foster parents were actively involved in obtaining services for the children in their care. In some cases reviewed, there was no thorough assessment of the child's or parents' needs and services were either not provided to children and their families to address these needs or there was no follow through to ensure that services were being provided.

### **Item 18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning**

When the Family Group Decision-Making process was used, the review found that it was a significant avenue to involve families in case planning. However, the review identified that the Agency lacks case management/coordination between family, service providers, foster parents, children, caseworkers, judges, and attorneys. In some cases this led to confusion about case plan goals and permanency plans, and in over half of the cases reviewed child and family involvement in case planning needed improvement.

### **Item 19. Worker Visits with Children**

Overall, this item was rated as an area needing improvement in the District. Although worker visits with the child was rated as a strength for a majority of the foster care cases reviewed, contact between the worker and the child was less than monthly in thirty-nine percent of the foster care cases. Of the in-home cases reviewed, fifty-five percent showed that Agency staff made contact with children in their caseloads less frequently than the policy requires. The lack of visitation between the worker and the child was often attributed by stakeholders to the high turnover in staff, high caseloads, and that intake workers were required to keep children on their caseloads after the initial investigation was completed rather than transferring these cases to ongoing workers.



## **Item 20. Worker Visits with Parents**

Some cases reviewed had no worker assigned to the case for various periods of time due to such factors as worker turnover and high caseloads, which accounted for very limited or sporadic contact between the Agency and the family. In 68 percent of the in-home cases and 60 percent of the foster care cases reviewed, in which this item was applicable, visitation between the worker and the parents was made less than monthly.

### **Status of Well-Being Outcome WB1 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Forty-eight percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB1. The review found that efforts need to be made in all the areas under this outcome.

***Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.***

## **Item 21. Educational Needs of Children**

The onsite review found that educational assessments were being completed in foster care cases and that the educational needs of these children were being addressed through services provided in all of the applicable foster care cases reviewed. However, the educational needs of children who were not in foster care were not addressed in 29 percent of the cases reviewed, particularly those children who were often tardy or absent from school on a frequent basis. School records were not found in 45 percent of the in-home cases and 24 percent of the foster care cases reviewed. There was no attention given to education in case planning in 13 percent of the applicable foster care cases and 50 percent of the applicable in-home cases reviewed.

### **Status of Well-Being Outcome WB2 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Seventy-nine percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being WB2.

***Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.***

## **Item 22. Physical Health of Children**

Initial health screenings were done for 77 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed. The in-home cases reviewed generally lacked health information in the case records. Thirty percent of the in-home cases reviewed showed a lack of follow-up on the identified health needs of the children. Twenty percent of the in-home cases reviewed had no preventative health care provided. In 53 percent of the in-home cases and 21 percent of the foster care cases reviewed the child had no preventative dental care provided.

### **Item 23. Mental Health of Children**

The review found that initial screenings and psychiatric evaluations were provided to 71 percent of the foster children whose cases were reviewed and that 77 percent of the foster children had mental health services that appropriately addressed their needs. The review found there was a general lack of mental health services for children who were not in foster care. In 29 percent of the in-home cases reviewed, no assessments or screenings were completed. A need for additional substance abuse treatment services, residential treatment, and placement options for children who needed therapeutic care was also found.

#### **Status of Well-Being Outcome WB3 – Not in Substantial Conformity**

Fifty-five percent of the cases reviewed substantially achieved Well-Being Outcome WB3.

## **KEY FINDINGS RELATING TO SYSTEMIC FACTORS**

### **IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM**

**Item 24. The State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.**

Historical information on cases is not captured in FACES, the District's automated child welfare information system. While the information system appears capable of capturing and producing information on the status of children in foster care, staff do not consistently input data, which contributes to inaccuracies in cases and unreliable information. Workers identified problems with printing information and reports from the system and the system is down frequently.

#### **Status of Statewide Information System – Not in Substantial Conformity**

### **V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM**

**Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.**

The Family Group Decision-Making process, when done, is a significant avenue to involve parents, extended family and children in case planning. Currently, this process is only used by the Collaboratives. Case planning was not done consistently by Agency staff and case plans were not found in all records. Additionally, not all parties involved in a case were consulted

when developing the case plan, including foster parents and children who are of an age to productively participate.

**Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.**

The Agency has an Administrative Review Unit to conduct case reviews. The review found that administrative reviews are not occurring in a timely manner in all cases. Administrative reviews are often held with only the caseworker and the Administrative Review Unit staff. These reviews typically do not include parents, children, Guardians Ad Litem, or service providers.

**Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.**

Notwithstanding improvements by the Courts to hold permanency hearings every 12 months, not all cases had these hearings within the time frame prescribed by the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

**Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.**

Courts generally do not terminate parental rights until an adoptive family has been identified for the child. This practice delays adoptions and reduces the chances or opportunities for some children to be adopted.

**Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.**

Foster parents, relative caretakers and pre-adoptive parents are not consistently notified of reviews, which indicates there is a breakdown in communication in the pre-administrative review process where it is determined who is to be involved in the review. Similarly, there sometimes is a communication gap in notifying these caregivers and prospective caregivers of the time and place of a hearing until the eleventh hour, if at all.

### **Status of Case Review System – Not in Substantial Conformity**

## **VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**

- Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.**

The District has developed licensing standards for foster and adoptive placements that regulate the health and safety of children placed in these homes and facilities. The Quality Assurance Unit is charged with monitoring compliance of these licensing standards. The unit identifies changes that should be implemented and develops corrective action plans to remedy deficiencies found in case reviews.

- Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.**

In some of the cases reviewed, there was nothing in the case record that showed that an administrative review process took place. For example, a system of checks and balances is supposed to be in place where social workers and supervisors go over the case plan, which sometimes also involves parents, and then designated Agency administrative personnel review the process to be sure that the appropriate procedures were followed.

### **Status of Quality Assurance System – Substantial Conformity**

The Agency has a system in place to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect their safety and health. However, the Agency was found to need improvements in their Supervisory Review System's implementation.

## **VII. TRAINING**

- Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.**

The comprehensive new worker training curriculum is targeted toward teaching critical child welfare skills. The review found that, in practice, there were significant time lags between the date a new worker is hired and when pre-service training is provided, due to supervisors assigning cases to new workers. Additionally, supervisors often call new workers out of training to handle on-going caseload activities.

**Item 33.       The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.**

Interviews with Agency staff revealed that the competency-based training for supervisors is not mandatory and, therefore, is not consistently utilized. Interviews with Collaboratives and Agency staff indicated there was a lack of specialized training for staff on the use of risk assessments, case planning, permanency, and engaging families in the child welfare process. Those interviewed attributed this problem to in-service training not being mandatory.

**Item 34.       The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.**

A comprehensive pre-service training curriculum is provided to all new foster and adoptive parents. The Agency's Foster Parent Resource Unit provides a variety of training sessions for foster and adoptive parents to meet the 15-hour in-service training requirement.

**Status of Training – Not in Substantial Conformity**

The District was found to have strengths in the area of a training system for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of licensed or approved facilities. The review found a need for improvement in the staff development and training program and on-going training for staff.

## **VIII. SERVICE ARRAY**

**Item 35.       The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.**

The District has a variety of services available to support children and families, including home based services, Families Together, the Collaboratives, educational advocates, independent living services, etc. Interviews with stakeholders indicated there was a general lack of mental health services, services to transition youth from residential care to community-based placements, and services for children with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.

**Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.**

Services provided by the Community Collaboratives are available in all four quadrants of the city, which makes them readily accessible to clients through the District's comprehensive public transportation system. In addition, some of the Collaboratives have vans to transport clients to appointments.

**Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.**

The Community Collaboratives individualize services to meet the specific needs of their families. They utilize individualized assessments to develop services plans that meet the needs of the children and families they serve. However, the review found that the Agency sometimes offers a set of services to all families rather than individualizing services to meet the specific needs of their clients.

**Status of Service Array – Substantial Conformity**

The review found that the District provides services in all areas of the City and that these services can be individualized to meet the needs of the children and families served by the Agency. However, the review found there was a general lack of specific services to meet the targeted needs of some of the Agency's clients, especially in terms of substance abuse treatment, mental health services, and housing.

## **IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY**

**Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.**

The community is an integral part of developing and implementing the provisions of the Agency's Child and Family Services Plan. Stakeholders indicated that the Community Collaboratives participate in planning and coordinating local services as specified in the Plan. As part of the Agency's planning process for the Annual Progress and Services Report, the Collaboratives have input into establishing goals and objectives for the following year. Additionally, Citizens Review Panel members, which consists of citizens, para-professionals, community activists, and public and private organizations, assisted with the development of the Child and Family Services Plan.

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.**

Outside public and private agencies are engaged in contributing to the Annual Progress and Services Report for Title IV-B. The eight Community Collaboratives report to the Agency annually on services they provided and identify service needs in the community.

**Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.**

Stakeholder interviews revealed that the Agency needs to better coordinate with Medicaid, mental health, and services provided to individuals with Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities.

**Status of Agency Responsiveness to the Community – Substantial Conformity**

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of engaging in on-going consultation with consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the court, and other agencies in implementing provisions of the Child and Family Services Plan. In addition, the Agency develops annual reports of progress and services with input from these stakeholders. The Child and Family Services Agency needs to better coordinate with external agencies such as Medicaid, mental health, and Mental Retardation/Developmental Disabilities providers.

**X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

**Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and childcare institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.**

The Agency currently licenses foster homes and certifies adoptive homes using standards that conform to nationally recognized requirements.

**Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or childcare institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.**

Interviews with stakeholders and foster parents confirmed that standards for foster homes are equally applied to all homes, including relatives who are providing care for the District's children.

- Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.**

Interviews with Agency staff, stakeholders, and the Foster Parent Support Unit confirmed that local criminal background checks as well as Federal Bureau of Investigation background checks are completed for all homes.

- Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.**

The Agency has implemented several programs to recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in care. These programs include One Church, One Child to recruit African-American families through the faith community; My Community, My Child developed by Casey Family Services to recruit foster and adoptive families in the communities in which children are from; the Community Awareness and Recruitment Summit held by local foster parents to educate the community and recruit prospective parents; and the AKIN (All Kids In Need) program that provides support for kinship, foster and adoptive families.

- Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.**

The Agency routinely places children for adoption in surrounding states because of the limited availability of adoptive families in the District.

#### **Status of Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention – Substantial Conformity**

The Agency was found to have strengths in the areas of implementing standards for foster homes and childcare institutions; equally applying standards to all approved foster homes and childcare institutions; ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of children in foster care; and for effectively using cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.